

I'M GOING HOME

BY

Emma Scott Nasmith

Amicus
copy

TO VICTORIA—

*“Whose hand is always
just above my shoulder
Hail and hearken from
the realms of help.”*

I'm Going Home

THE old home town, now a city, has invited us to go home and spend a week, having a good time, among old friends, old environments and old associations.

I am going home!

They say everybody will be there. Then there will be an innumerable host—those we can see and many we cannot see! Some will be able to see them.

“For spirit with spirit can meet,
Closer are they than breathing,
Nearer than hands or feet.”

As I think of it I seem to hear thunder, see lightning, feel wind and rain on my face.

I am a child again, in my attic bedroom, awakened by the patter of rain on the roof. I want to go out and be part of all the beauty and wonder. I hear the cry of a kitten, I spring from my bed hurry down the attic stair. I am stopped by Maria.

“Go back to bed, dear,” says Maria.

“Maria, I hear the cry of a kitten, please let me go and bring it in?”

"It has been brought in," she says—"Now go back to your bed, like a good little girl, and you will see your kitty in the morning."

Being but four, I go back to my bed to dream of a kitty, and the coming of the day.

Early in the morning I am taken to my mother's room to see the kitten, and find instead, a little red-headed baby, snuggling close to my mother's side.

"This is your little boy to keep" — said my mother.

From that moment I was truly alive. Every happening of my life dates from that night of storm and its morning of joy. I am going home.

When I was five, Maria dressed me very carefully one morning, and my only sister, older than I, took me to school.

"She is such a little thing, take her home till she grows bigger"—said the teacher.

"She is five" — said my sister, "and the worst chatterbox, she wakes the baby, and mother wants to get rid of her."

"Keep the little thing, and do the best you can for her," said Mr. Douglas, a trustee, who was visiting the school, "I know her mother."

So I proudly went to school when I was five, to make life easier for my mother. I loved Miss Campbell. I'll see her when I go home. Miss Polly Smith and Miss Emma Spragge were my teachers of a later date. I adored them, their lovely manners and quiet voices have been a constant memory, like a sweet perfume. Shall I see them when I go home? When either of them came into the room I felt that all things would go well with me; but when Miss M came in I knew I was going to be a bad girl. The desire to talk when she was in the room was irresistible. She punished me with a strap that wound itself around the back of my hand and invariably raised blisters. On those days I was careful to keep my hands in the back-ground lest anyone should see the blisters and I would be disgraced.

Jane Davis, the girl who sat in front of me at school, would say — "Why don't you tell your mother?"

"Because I am ashamed and know mother would punish me for being disobedient."

"That's right," said Kate Coulson, "never be a tattle-tale." Kate Coulson, with clustering fair curls all over her shapely head, was my ideal school girl.

We were a happy family of six children in a Clergyman's home. I hear my mother say, "Run

along little girl, get the bread for supper and thank Mr. Fessant for the cottage loaf, he sent me yesterday, it was most delicious. Charge the bread and here is some money to do some shopping with. Tie it in your handkerchief. Do not stay to play with Martha and Lily. Go to the Pork House and ask Mr. Lloyd if he will please give you some Fresh Lamb Chops and a Calf's Liver. Take your basket with a clean towel to wrap them in. Get two pounds of the best butter and a dozen fresh eggs at Boyd's. Go to Boak and Woods for two spools of thread, white and black, No. 40. The meat will be twenty-five cents, two pounds of butter will be twenty-five cents, a dozen of eggs will be ten cents and the spools will be five cents. There's sixty-five cents and here's a penny to buy some taffy at Miss West's. Now run along, Maria is waiting to broil the chops and liver. The potatoes are in the oven baking for supper."

I hurry along down the garden path, under the plum and apple trees, through the hole in the fence, where a picket is off, over the meadow, crossing a rushing stream on a narrow plank, then climb the stile opposite the bake-shop with "S. Fessant" in black letters, above the door.

"How is thy mother," says Stephen Fessant, the Quaker, in answer to the tingle of the bell above the door? "Thee can come into the bake-house

and choose the loaf for thy mother," he said, as I gave him my mother's thanks.

I go and see the bread, brown and crusty, on the stones of the Dutch oven. He hands me a long wooden shovel with the words "Fish out the choice loaf for thy Mother." With pride I do as I am told. The smell of that bread is in my nostrils as I write.

Such suppers as we had in that home! After our evening meal there was prayers. Then the children had to pile up and carry out the dishes to the kitchen. Then came the joy of going into the study where father would read to us for an hour. 'Twas there we learned to love Shakespeare. Those first lessons in scansion have never been forgotten. The study was a beautiful room to us. There were some fine pieces of old walnut furniture. The walls were lined with books, books we had access to at any and all times, on one condition, that our hands were clean. Then there were some old English prints. A great copy of Knight's Shakespeare was on a stand low enough for the smallest child to see the pictures.

After our study hour, the older children were free to go and play, to play games in the summer time, sleighriding or skating in the winter time. What skaters there were in that old Boyd Street Rink. I used to watch my two big brothers skat-

ing with their friends, George Inglis, Tom Douglas, Bill Allan, Charlie Fox, Sid Brown, Jim Brown, R. P. Butchant and Bob Kennedy, Clarice Gordon, Annie Fox, Miss Vick, Maggie Miller, Jenny Kennedy, Jenny Allan, Lou Green and Cassie Miller, I thought they were the grandest skaters in the world, I think so still. How well I remember the Christmas I got a pair of wooden skates, screwing them into the heels of my boots and strapping them on, then coaxing my brothers to take me around the rink just once. They would take me around just once and then give me five cents to go home. There came a day when the other boys would take me around and they did not give me five cents to go home.

I'm going home.

Will I see that old study that my mother took so great a pride in, with the candlesticks, bits of pewter and silver brought from Ireland when she came, a little child, in a sailing vessel with her parents twelve weeks at sea. Will I hear again the stories of that crossing and of the struggles of the pioneers, to hew out homes in the great woods of Ontario?

I remember one night in particular at our home, when the Rev. John Sommerville, Rev. W. B. Danard and Mr. W. P. Telfer were having some supper of bread and cheese and apple cider, Mr.

Sommerville said, "How did you become a Methodist Minister; your people were all Presbyterians were they not, Mr. Scott?"

"Yes," said my father, "but I was converted at a Methodist Camp Meeting. The morning after my conversion I was in the woods chopping, when two men came and said, 'lay down thy axe at the foot of the tree and go into the world to preach the gospel.' I laid down my axe as I was told."

When I went to my mother, she said, "James, you will never leave the kirk for the Methodist meeting house, will ye?"

"Yes, mother I will, for 'twas there I heard the call."

"Then James, thy mother will never hear her first-born preach."

"The Sunday I preached my first sermon," said my father, "in a little chapel I had helped to build in the small clearing six miles from my father's home, I went with my Father's but without my mother's blessing. I was giving out the first hymn when I saw a little black-veiled figure hurry into the back seat. I preached my sermon in fear and trembling for I knew my mother was listening to me. As I gave out the last hymn the little veiled figure hastily left the chapel. When I reached home, after a walk of six miles, my mother was

swinging the crane with a pot of potatoes over the open fire. Without turning her head she called, "James bring some chips to hurry up the fire, I am a bit late with my dinner." To the day of her death she never said, "James, I heard you preach your first sermon," although she never missed a sermon I preached if she could help it.

I'm going home.

I hear my mother calling, "Get up dear it's time to go for the cow, Willie and Florence Early have gone by with theirs."

I get up and hurry out in the fresh morning air, up Baker Street, past the LePan's house. I see Mr. LePan walking down to the gate, he calls to me.

"When you drive back the cow, bring your pail and Ringo will give you some asparagus. I want your mother to have some of the first cuttings."

As I enter the Brown's meadow, calling "Co-boss, Co-boss, Co-boss," Ringo's black head comes over the high board fence, "Doan you forget dat pail chile, I has your mammy's sparrow grass under that rhubarb leaf. I cut it when the dew was on the ground."

"Thank you Ringo, I'll bring the pail, Co-boss."

Will I see that mischievous black face over the top of the fence when I go home? Will I see Mr. LePan in gay berlin wool slippers walking in his

garden and Mrs. LePan by his side, dressed in the mauve gown with a black lace cap and mauve rosettes?

I'm going home.

We believed our father had done us all an injustice by choosing to be a Minister rather than a more prosperous citizen, such as a grocer or a carpenter. Two families of these trades lived near us and went to our church. Their children were so well dressed. They had luscious pies and juicy puddings and roasts for their dinners. We adored our mother and felt sorry for her. She had married a Minister and we revered her as a martyr. We believed it was very hard to be a Minister's wife because she never had money to buy the things she loved, and then she was always expected to be an example. It was impressed upon us that we were Minister's children, and had to be an example to others. Early in life the older members of our family had a meeting and resolved that they would live their own lives, and not be an example to anybody. This resolve was passed on to the younger set and we tried to be true to the spirit of our seniors.

When quite young I was taken to prayer meeting by my mother. I thought my father looked very fine in his black clothes. He was six feet tall. I liked his straight nose, like the noses of the discus

throwers in the picture on our study walls. I was proud of him as he gave out the hymn. Then I felt my mother trembling and realized this was one of the times she had to be an example. The poor darling, so shy and reserved, was expected to give her testimony! Again I looked at my father but my pride in him was gone. He was the cause of her fear. When my mother rose and repeated some words inaudible to me, my heart was throbbing loud, and fast, and the tears began to fall. As she sat down, my father looked at me and said, "What have you to say, dear?"

I sprang to my feet and hurled these words at him. "Provoke not thy children to wrath," rushed out of the church and home to my room. I feared I had disgraced my father, but I did not care, my beloved mother was avenged. I got into bed without saying my prayers. Later I heard my father, mother and Mr. Speers go into the study, and to my great relief they were laughing. I heard my father say—"The little spitfire, whatever possessed her, Elizabeth?" I could not hear my mother's answer, but it sounded happy and I fell asleep saying, "If I should die before I wake." That episode was never alluded to in our family, and my respect for my father revived.

I'm going home.

On Saturday afternoons, when we grew older, we were allowed to go for picnics. We would take our baskets and go up the hill to a small farm my father had bought with the hope that after he was superannuated we might have a permanent home. What romps we had over the meadows to the spring and then climb to the high rocks above. What adventures exploring the caves, what fun preparing our supper, cooking eggs, roasting potatoes and corn in the hot ashes of our stationary stove. If we loitered too long we would hear the sound of a voice along the road singing the old negro spiritual "Swing low sweet chariot coming to carry me home," and Father Miller, a colored man who had a little home nearby, would stand in our midst, "Good night children, I hope you have had a good picnic, but now it is time to go home. Your mother will be expecting you." When he said that, we knew we had to go. Father Miller always inspired obedience, although he was reverently courteous to everybody, especially so to little children. As we passed him he would stand with uncovered head bowing low to the group of little children and we would return the courtesy with copied dignity and charm. As we hurried along the hill path that old melody floated after us — "Swing low sweet chariot coming to carry me home."

I'm going home.

What will we do when we go home? Will Dave Stoddard meet us at the train? Will he tell us to wait in the station till he takes the people who live below the hill home and then will he come to get us and our boxes?

Where will we go when we go home? Will we turn first along the old hill path, still worn by the feet of little children going to and fro from school? Will we pass in through the gate of the old farm to the door of the little cottage, built when our dream came true? Will the old beeches and maples that stood guard over our house still be there? "Will golden lie the meadow and golden run the streams" when we go home? Will we follow the open road to the Frost homestead to get that view from the top of the hill, finer than the one from the Posillipo in Naples? Will the dearest of neighbours led by Jim come to the verandah to greet us?

Will the dear old town, now grown into a City, seem too large for the valley plateau between two high hills? Will the river still wind its uninterrupted way? Will the swimming hole still be there where the boys of the town learned to swim by being shoved off the bank of the river, and left to scramble out as best they could?

I'm going home.

Will we walk down Poulette Street to see Mr. James McLachlan, and will he twist a cornucopia of paper and fill it with bull's eyes and tell us at the same time we are a credit to the town? Will we believe him as we did of yore?

Will we go on up to the Collegiate and hear Mr. Packham say, "Are you talking young lady?" and when I answer—"Yes, Sir"—then go and sit with Fred, will I hurry to take my punishment, glad of the chance to sit with Fred?

Will we go to the old church and into Mary Ann Meir's class, say our golden text and get our ticket? As we come out will Mr. John Rutherford have a peppermint ready to drop into our waiting mouth?

Will we sit in the old pew in church, and watch Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Allen come into the church looking so grand? Dr. and Mrs. Cameron and the congregation we knew so well file in?

Will we go down to the dock to see if the Francis Smith is in, then brag to anyone, who will listen, of the many times we went up the Lakes on that gorgeous ship with Captain Tate Robertson, Mr. Henry Smith the Purser, and Mate McLeod at the wheel? What sails we had, what fun making taffy in the kitchen, barely escaping detection when our big brother came looking for us—by

being shoved into the dumb waiter and landing in the pantry above with the dishes.

I'm going home.

Will we take our picnic baskets, calling at the Library for Victoria Scott, have a little visit with Judge Morrison then climb to the High Rock. After feasting our eyes on that Incomparable Harbor and the waterways that lead out into the great world, to the Christian Islands to Wiarton, Meaford, Collingwood, to the Upper Lakes, turn to find the camp stove merrily burning and grouped around it, *our family*, the Eatons, the Armstrongs, the Buchans, the Moores, the Wilcox's and the Lang's? Will we fry our bacon, make our salad, boil our corn, then eat our supper as the sun goes down with the sting of the air blown from Lake Superior in our faces? Will we linger on till the stars come into the sky, then winding our way down the rocks to our quiet homes under their shadowing peace, sing "Good night Ladies," and then "O God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, our shelter from the stormy blast and our eternal home"?

I'm going home.



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